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2000 Hurricane Season Comes to a Close

Above-Average Season, But Fewer Landfalls

By [Sharon Keeler](#)
UNH News Bureau

December 1, 2000

DURHAM, N.H. -- Scientists who predicted an above-average Atlantic hurricane season this year were right on the money, even though many people in the United States might be wondering, "What storms?"

The reason: only two -- Hurricane Gordon, a minimal hurricane, and Tropical Storm Helene -- made landfall in this country. Both made their way ashore in Florida, Gordon on Sept. 18 and Helene on Sept. 22.

"While it may seem like we had a quiet season, we actually had 14 named storms this season, eight of which were hurricanes," says N.H. State Climatologist Barry Keim, associate professor in the University of New Hampshire's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space and Department of Geography. "People just weren't as aware of them because most didn't reach land and only one did substantial damage."

That one -- Hurricane Keith -- made landfall in Mexico Oct. 6, bringing maximum winds of 90 miles per hour and rainfall between eight and 12 inches. It also swamped Central America, the Yucatan Peninsula and Belize.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) identifies an above-average hurricane season as one that brings 11 or more tropical storms, of which seven or more become hurricanes.

"The greatest influence in forecasting an above-average hurricane season this year was the ongoing La Nina," says Keim. "This is a climate phenomenon of colder than normal Pacific Ocean temperatures that create favorable upper air conditions for the formation of hurricanes and tropical storms."

Keim explains that steering currents, which cannot be accurately predicted, kept most of the storms this season out at sea. Only two minimal hurricanes, Michael and Florence, tracked as far north as New England. Both stayed hundreds of miles off-shore.

"This was in stark contrast to last year's season," says Keim, "when several disastrous storms crossed land, including four which hit the United States. The remnants of two -- Dennis and Floyd -- actually made their way into New England."

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